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Spirit Communion:
An immovable fact in the internal
consciousness and external history
of man..

by
J. B. Ferguson.

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SPIRIT COMMUNION:

AN IMMOVABLE FACT

IN THE

INTERNAL CONSCIOUSNESS

AND

EXTERNAL HISTORY OF MAN,

BEING AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN THE REGULAR COURSE OF PUBLIC MINISTRATION, IN
NASHVILLE, TENN., APRIL 15, 1855.

BY J. B. FERGUSON.

PUBLISHED AND CIRCULATED GRATUITOUSLY BY M. W. WETMORE.

NASHVILLE:
M'KENNIE & BROWN, PRINTERS—TRUE WHIG OFFICE.
1855.

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SPIRIT COMMUNION.

P R A Y E R .

ALL-HELPING SPIRIT, aid me to think clearly and speak impressively to these, Thy creatures. Our humble power of Thought, with its immortal instincts, we would now turn to Thee. Our knowledge is very limited; our judgment imperfect; our love grows cold, and our hearts harden in selfishness; while our feet often wander in the thorny paths of wrong-doing and sorrow. Give us the wings of faith and pure desire, that we may, for this hour at least, fly away from the perplexities of weak and misguided judgment; the oppression of care, and the heart-stings of unworthy affections and fears. How wide, O, God! the gulf between the clear skies of Thy unfailing love, and the low, dark, clouds of our ignorance, and the benighted places of our gross indulgences! But Thou dost pity and help us, as our souls bear testimony every day. Thy beneficent smile, spread o'er the face of Nature, gives rays of light to our dark pathway; and the inspirations of Thy good Spirit warm our hearts to love and adoration. Unreservedly would we commit ourselves and our interests to Thy guiding wisdom, hopefully trusting that we shall be taught that truth which shall never die; gain that treasure which shall never corrupt; secure that faith that shall always deliver; and that delight, angelie, that shall illumine the gateway of death with hope eternal! O, fit us for the heavenly light and life. May we feel the impulses of immortal souls, and anticipate, with satisfying foretastes, the welcome and bliss of our future

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homes. Bless us with desire and power to bless others, in both word and deed. May we feel poor with Thy poor, lonely with thy orphans, sorrowful with Thy cast down and disconsolate ones, that we may be elevated together. May sickness, distress and misery find us ever ready to minister, both with our sympathy and substance. May our lives be more consistent than our words can possibly be, and become sermons of practical devotion to duty and praise. And in the inner depths of our souls, may we feel Thy peace, so pure, so full, that we may triumphantly pass, amid all conflict, to that glorious Heaven to which Thou hast lifted our purest desires and holiest anticipations. And to Thee, ever-blessed Father, be the glory eternal—Amen.

A D D R E S S .

AND now, having prayed, we have scarcely faith enough in ourselves, our fellows, or in our God, to proceed. The chilly influences of the cold and selfish controversies of the religious leaders of the people, incapacitate us to speak with living power, and to hear with meditative and inspiring interest. They have suppressed Thought, and the suppression of Thought is the most deadly infidelity possible to the human mind; it is the heresy of heresies, and the atheism of the church. By Thought we are elevated above the brute; take our appointed rank in the scale of accountable being; gain the agencies by which to purify our grossness and ally ourselves to all Christ-like intelligences and God-like purposes. It is the talisman of power to the human soul, and only in its free exercise can it be loving and helpful amid the trials of a frail humanity. It alone can make Truth our own conviction, duty our personal choice, holiness and Heaven our desire and delight; for it is the medium alike for all earthly and heavenly influences upon rational intelligences; for all earthly, as the negative basis upon which, and in which, the pure positive power of God may operate to secure our refinement and progress, and the

advancement of the world. Let us charitably hear, then, that we may judge justly and act considerately toward all the influences and persons with which we have our discipline.

There is a very current, and, in many circles of society, a somewhat popular idea, that all light upon man's spiritual or immortal relations, was made to shine in the past ages of human history, and that it is alike irreverent and preposterous to seek further knowledge or confirmation in the higher developments of mind and triumphs of knowledge, that have marked succeeding, and characterize the present generations. We esteem this idea as the offspring of a false, not to say idolatrous reverence of the past, tending to enslave and degrade human nature, and corrupt the native birth-right and holiest privilege of the soul: the birth-right of Thought, and the privilege of forming our convictions according to the light we enjoy from the ever-unfolding and eternal sources of wisdom and help in God. The idea is predicated upon an absurdity. It is, that the nature of God is changeable. For, if God be the same, and his purposes without variation, then it cannot be possible that one mind in one age can arrive at the knowledge of Truth, and another mind be denied the privilege. In other words: what is possible to one mind, under the same conditions, is possible to all. If, therefore, God is the same, and the human mind the same, no discovery of Truth possible to one age, can be rendered impossible to another. Every attainment, therefore, gained by Prophet or Philosopher, is but a revelation of a possibility to any mind equally true to its nature and privileges. Beside, the opposite idea would make God a respecter of persons and peoples, and thus give foundation for all the partial, passionate and revengeful character ascribed to him by the childish systems of Heathenism, and the sectarian controversies and creeds of Christendom, which the enlightened votaries of each can never believe to be true, and which the enslaved receive more with fear, than either hope or faith.

Again: The idea that all religious truth is confined to a past age, and that all we have to do is to memorize and

interpret, (or, if I might speak from the practical effects of that interpretation, I would say,) or quarrel over that truth and its application, is founded upon a mistaken view of Truth itself. It supposes that Truth can be mapped and bounded, can be limited if not exhausted. It is the common mistake in childish life, when we imagine our home the universe, our parents and friends the greatest of mankind, and our interests and pleasures the full measure of the purposes of God. It is pardonable in a child—is evidently necessary for his dangerous and disciplinary stages of progress; but here, as in all things, we should seek a state of Thought and Piety in which to dispense with childish things. Truth never was exhausted—never was made less. The spiritual relationships of man are infinite, because they connect us with God, who is connected with all. We cannot embrace the idea of *one God*, without being compelled to this thought; and hence, the knowledge of God is the eternal life of the soul, for it connects it with all life, and its progress consists in finding, using and enjoying that connection. Whoever made a truth less by stating it, or applying it? The estimate of it may have been made less, as in the vain attempts to circumscribe all truth in a creed, but the exhaustless fountain flows on, and as it flows forever will flow on; for its source is in God, the All of Truth, to whom we are connected as we are assimilated more and more to His nature and perfections. We may discover truth, but we cannot create it. We may apply it in exquisite and beautiful skill; but we can never exhaust it. And every man being born with an immortal nature as a semblance of his God, is born with immortal instincts for God's truth; and only as he sees and uses it for himself, is he happy, hopeful, or *man-like*. He, for himself, and not for another, has his God to find and adore; the Christ-like spirit, or anointing of that God to enjoy and increase, and the endless chain that binds him to the spiritual universe, to discover and brighten. This I know, though once I knew it not; but the knowledge I cannot directly impart, for no one could impart it to *me*, as *my* experience, however blissful it may have been, as *theirs*; but I can state it, after the manner of the ancient Prophets and Apostles, or after what I am

permitted to call my own. Here is the place for the testimony of experience, and this can never be surrendered. We may become false to it, for Judas betrayed his Christ when he betrayed his brother; and every religious persecutor does the same; whether consciously or unconsciously, depends upon his degree of opened soul, or his attainment in the stature of Truth. Truth is immortal—not as a figure of speech, a beauty of poetry—but in its nature immortal. It knows no diminution, no corruption, no perversion, no death. We may diminish ourselves in its knowledge and power; we may pervert and enslave our faculties to discover, receive and enjoy truth; we may corrupt our minds and hearts so that they almost, or quite cease to reflect it. In a word, we may degenerate to the dull, sensual plane of bruteism, and seek to hallow it by the holy name of Christ and God, or Humanity and Heaven. But God and Truth remain the same, and we never come to enjoy either until we become true to ourselves and the Truth-like, God-like impress of Divinity we bear. Sacred and inviolate, like the pure sky above us, it lives; and though clouds may hide it from our eyes it hides it not from itself. As men become more true to themselves, to the nature they inherit, to the universe of which they form a part, they ascend in harmony with its eternal laws, and behold what men less true, idolatrously worship, or distastefully blaspheme, or fight over.

Truth is the same in nature, though infinite in the degree of its reflections. Mathematics is the same in its nature, but how wide the degrees of its reflections in the negro, who cannot tell the number of his fingers, and La Place, who calculates the lines of the stars; and, yet, who would compare either to the mathematics of God? Music is the same in the lonely murmuring of the forest brook and in the anthem of Beethoven; yet, who could ever rationally think of music as exhausted in its sweet melodies and enrapturing harmony. Poetry is the same in the rude ballad of the Druid bard and the lofty conceptions that flow through Harris; but eternity will never exhaust its power to move and elevate. Philosophy is the same in the Mexican, who lubricates the wheels of his cart from the bark of the elm,

and in the sublime reasoning of Davis; but its field is the universe, and its lessons are for all time. So, Jesus, and every spiritually illuminated soul, declares truth, but does not exhaust it—performs many wonderful and loving works, but ever promises, in that very performance, that his disciples shall do greater.

We reverence the past, then, because it reveals the links in the chain of an eternal Providence; but we use the present as our day, that the chain be neither buried nor broken; for we too, live, move and have our being in God, as well as they who have passed through the earthly life, and our day will answer for us as well as it will for them, according to our fidelity and devotion.

Now, these truths are so simple, so self-evident, that we wonder that they should ever be questioned; but we do not wonder at the terrible results that inevitably follow wherever they are disregarded. Dark and fearful despotism in government; furious and bitter scorning and persecution in churches; frowning and hideous superstitions in religion: families separated; knowledge despised; science neglected, and the earth mourning beneath the inhabitants thereof, who deliver the assassin and crucify the Saviour, are the dread issues of a prostration of reason, and a disregard of the eternal privileges it secures. But, perhaps, it would be well to note some of the common appeals by which it is justified.

Because the Bible contains many divine disclosures, and is made the foundation of much that is good and indispensable in human society, therefore, a very plausible appeal is made to popular prejudice in opposition to every disclosure upon man's moral and spiritual relations, as if it would subvert the morality and religion man instinctively regards. But this appeal presumes upon an unwarrantable ignorance, and thus shows itself more fatal to the good order of society and the elevation of man, than any perversion of a real privilege can possibly be. We have need only to ask: Has not every discovery in science and skill in the arts been condemned by the very men who were enjoying their advantages, under the influence of the blind bigotry and slavish

reverence of those who were the professed and consecrated expounders of Bibles and Records? Is the Bible, then, opposed to knowledge? Does it fear the light? Can a communication from God be endangered by spreading it before the world? Is man capable of judging for himself? and if not, who are they who presume to judge for him? What lineage do they bear that gives the right to lord it over the consciences of their fellows? Are they not *men* of like passions and frailties with their kind? Let their history and present position answer.

But, in answering this last question, we probe this difficulty to its core. We extend the question, and ask, from whence came this Biblical record? What favored ages in human history does it cover? What are the sublime and heavenly practices that characterized its heroes? Were they *men* or *gods*? Or, if more under the influence of Truth than others, was it not because they were more true?—more true to themselves and their God?—that is, more true to the same minds we bear, the same universe we live in, the same God *over* and *in* us all.

Let us open the Book and see, for we have studied it from our childhood. It tells us that man was created perfect; that he fell, and the vast majority of its devotees say so fell as to involve himself and all his descendants in a depravity of nature that exposes him to all the ills of the present life, and to the pains of endless torture in the life to come. Here, we ask, can nature be depraved? Character may be, but how can God's own nature, which man is represented to have received by Divine inbreathing, be depraved? Can you corrupt the Deity? This is like corrupting or exhausting Truth? But farther: the world degenerates; God grieves that he created it; destroys it with a flood, only to make its condition hopelessly worse in the hell beyond, and saves one man and his family. We would expect that this man would be pure, and better fulfill the ends of creation, that seem, upon a first experiment, to have failed. But what does the sequel prove? He worships, it is true; but lies down in drunkenness and obscenity, and rises up to curse the child that laughs at his folly!

But you will tell me that he is not a good example? I answer, is Abraham, denying the wife of his bosom, and repeating the denial? Is Jacob, wrenching the paternal blessing from a tender and starving brother by deceiving a blind father? Are Judah and his brethren, in their envy of Joseph and his sale to the traffickers in human flesh of those days?

Or, is Moses the object of your admiration; for he, as the others, is worthy on many accounts. Behold him, like a thief in the night, casting his eyes before and behind, and then slaying the Egyptian. Perhaps David, whom the record says, "was a man after God's own heart," is free from the mortal taint. Read the 109th Psalm, and answer to your own consciences and to your God. He prays that his enemy may be condemned when judged; that the iniquity of his father and the sin of his mother may not be forgotten; that his innocent wife may be a widow, and his unoffending children beggars; that an executioner may catch his goods; that his posterity may be blotted out, and that God may never forgive him! Now contrast this with a descendant of his, who lived a God among such men, who, in the agonies of a shameless crucifixion, prays to *his* God to forgive the vilest of enemies; for, says he, "they know not what they do." Would Noah, or Abraham, or Moses, or David, have desired their enemies with them in Paradise, as Jesus promised one of the vilest of mankind?

But why refer to these facts? It is to show that the mortal frailty to which you and your kind are subject, belonged to the men who wrote, and who are biographically sketched in your Bible. Divine truth is in it, we do not deny, but rejoice to believe and prove upon all fitting occasions. But human error is equally manifest, and its shadow is cast in the selfishness, bigotry, and cruelty of the present age. The Bible Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, delivered truths in exact proportion as they were true. You do the same. Where they failed, we should not fail; where they attained to spiritual knowledge, peace and joy, we may attain, and glorify the same exhaustless Providence that made John the Baptist superior to Moses and the Prophets, and which,

through Jesus, in word and deed, reveals the truth, "that the least in the kingdom of Heaven may be greater than John."

Are we true to our nature, discipline, opportunities and privileges? If so, what is our hope? Is it built upon a record that covers a period of some five thousand years, and fragmentary at that—that has been handed down from generation to generation without the facilities for printing and preserving that you possess—that has been collected, altered, added to and subtracted from, according as ambitious monarchs and corrupted priesthoods have felt inclined or believed would best subserve their interests?—a record appealed to, to substantiate the claims of every conflicting sect, from the Romanist to the Mormon? Or do you build your hopes upon the cultivation of your own nature by its aid and all other aid; and if so, do you not commune with the immortal friends that have gone before, as did Abraham, Moses, John, and all the prophets, whose authority you have so blindly reverenced? This is the question. If with all their faults and frailties they communed with the spiritual world, how claim you to be their disciples, while I would hope, with less impurity, you know not the end of your earthly pilgrimage, and deny the possibility of knowing? If God is the same—if the human mind is the same—if the ancients, who, with their faults recorded, enjoyed this privilege, why do you not enjoy it?

I testify, then, in common with hundreds and thousands of this age, that the privilege still exists, and its advantages, like the advantages of every privilege in nature, depends upon our faithfulness to ourselves, to our nature and to God. Its purposes and ends need not be stated, for they would not be believed, except as we come to appreciate and enjoy this natural birth-right and indestructible prerogative of every human being.

But, am I told we have never seen ministering spirits, and our ears are never saluted by their heavenly voices? I answer: Have you ever seen God, or Christ, or the Prophets? And is sight the measure of human knowledge and bliss? Do you deny the existence of an ocean, because you

cannot see it? Does the reality of blindness, or limited vision, destroy the light of heaven and the glory of God? And so every objection you urge—and you ought to urge them to yourselves, at least—will but reveal the solemnity and power of that greatest of all truths, that in the exact proportion in which we are faithful to ourselves and the god-like faculties we possess, God, and Heaven, and heavenly influences find their reflection in us.

But some will say within themselves, would that we could believe Spiritual Communion possible to us as well as to the ancients. It would give new hope, new life and vigor to our souls; it would span with new prospects, the troubled ocean of our thought, and reveal the truly sublime purposes of our being and earthly discipline; and we, too, would come to feel those sacred affinities that unite all in one kindred in God. It appears as an indispensable nutriment to our souls, and yet overburdens our thought. We should no longer live in doubt, nor die in fear, but stand as men in God, to believe, and not to increase the misfortunes of our kind. The roots of our thought would go down beneath encumbering forms that oppress the soul, and with new prospects we could seek the elevation of all our race. This power, we admit, belonged to Christ and the Apostles, but did it not die with them?

We would say, in reply: no truth can die; no true privilege can be finally lost. This privilege did belong to Christ and the Apostles, for they lived true to the Divinity within them, and the powers it granted to that truthfulness. They lived near the departed, conversed with them in their holiest hours, and by their aid healed the sick and comforted the distressed. Why, then, if we were equally true, equally hopeful, equally pure, equally reliant upon God in all, could we not come as near our departed? Our grosser nature alone, hinders *our* approach. All that can be necessary for the benefit of man is within our grasp; but skepticism, intolerance, priestly rule, and wrong in ourselves, with overwhelming force, condemn us to that devotion to self that absorbs the life of the dead and the purity of the living, to mourn over wrecked hopes and prostrated powers. We

have seen the sick healed, the lame walk, and the decrepit strengthened, wrongs corrected, errors overcome, servitude supplanted by freedom, and doubt removed, by positive intercourse with the spirits of those who were bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and all in witness to the truth of the light now breaking everywhere upon the nineteenth century, and in promise of the glory of God to cover the earth with a new-born race, to be immersed in a spirit of truth and love that will sweeten the souls of all, wipe the tear of sorrow, and sow the seed of hope in the most desolate hearts. And we know that if our minds could be entirely harmonious with the benevolent purposes of our God, agencies exist to carry forward this work to an extent and to ends that never entered into the imagination of the most hopeful.

But, in the face of these undeniable facts, what are we told; how are we met? "If the good spirits come to administer to our good, may not the evil come to tempt us and lead us astray?" I ask this objector, where is your faith in God? He never permitted this; by which I mean, he so constructed the mind, and the universe of visible and invisible ministrations to its development and power, that like will seek like, "with unerring aim." It is true, man may deceive himself. He may degrade himself so low that nothing but the low can gratify him. He may mistake the answers of his own mind for the responses of spirits. But he knows and feels his self-deception whenever true to himself. No undeveloped spirit ever intrudes upon those who seek Light and Hope. This is the message we have from all, and we have never met with an exception. Pratting innocence, and hoary experience testify at our hearthstones, every day, and under every variety of circumstances, that, as *we are* and as *we become*, in purity, in faithfulness, in hope, so are our kindred in God drawn to us, to still further elevate and increase our powers, both to bear and to do, to behold and to testify. While all bring the inspiring assurance that this Light is now dawning upon the hilltops of every land, and to use their own language, "but a few silent watches of the night, and the distant dawn will proclaim the

epoch of a brighter day, to fill the heart with joy and illumine the soul with a resplendent orb, whose penetrating rays shall give life and vigor to the parched earth, from whence shall spring a joyous birth of gladness that shall bind together all men in unison to their great end in God. Its epoch is already here." From ten thousand seeing, hearing and impressible minds, in every quarter of the globe, and without reference to any partisan views of religion, government or selfish interest, this announcement is being made, attended with a weight of evidence such as was never given to any fact of your belief.

We tell you this calmly—we pass by all outside statements that we are crazed, are fanatics, or selfish schemers. We leave you and all to judge of the justice of such reflections. We live, and labor, and move among you, and you know whether it be true or false; and we assure you, that such charges excite us not, not because we are not as other men, but because we know whereof we affirm, and feel that Truth is the birth-right of man from his God, and will yet prevail over our follies and yours, and that it is our mutual duty to prepare to receive and apply it. We ask of you no compensation for our testimony, whether spoken or printed. Gratuitously we print and circulate what we receive to the extent of our means, and in some instances beyond them. Not one cent of profit has any Spiritualist in Nashville, either directly or indirectly, received for his labor or expense, in speaking or publishing in this cause. Of many in other places, this is equally true, and if of any it be otherwise, we know it not, the current representations to the contrary notwithstanding. And we ask nothing. Though poor in this world we have been made rich in the evidences of an immortal estate, and expect to sustain ourselves in temporal matters as others, esteeming it a privilege that amply compensates for all apparent sacrifices, (for they are but apparent,) to spend and be spent in elevating the hope of a common brotherhood.

Nor, can we promise ourselves any exclusive honor or personal elevation. We have no privilege that is not open to all, for all have departed ones making a kindred in God.

We have no attainment that greater faithfulness upon your part will not make greater to you than ours is to us. And surely to be feared by our friends whom we have loved and served with uninterrupted devotion; to be held in doubt by thousands who hear of us as demented or worse; to be watched in our every word and act; surely, surely, this could offer no inducement to our testimony. And yet, we esteem it the highest honor to say, that a Blessed Light, which shall be to all people, is now dawning, and its evidences are open to all, while not made necessarily dependant upon any. Already, consciously or unconsciously to the people, it influences all the movements of the age; controlling some—directing others—affecting all, from the war in the Crimea, to the humblest efforts of the lowliest creature of God, seeking spiritual light and help.

Nor do we abandon any honorable avocation for this privilege. It comes from the God who made us to eat, drink and sleep, and provide for our natural wants. Nay, it gives us holier views of the humblest calling; and assigns our natural wants and duties their proper place, neither engrossing our souls nor dwarfing our bodies. Less demands but little, and our animal are sure to be our lesser wants. "As nature needs, so nature feeds;" and through our spiritual being, our higher nature, it gives admonition of all we need for ourselves and others. Is there a Spiritualist of your acquaintance, I mean one who claims to have daily spiritual privileges, whose business, family, or citizen duties show the least neglect? Think and answer for yourselves, before you believe the false tales of insanity, &c., huckstered to the rabble. Your wise men predicted we would all be insane; proposed enlarging your asylum for our benefit, and your foolish men believed the prediction, and are astonished that it is not fulfilled. Now, tell me, did you ever see a person made insane by Spiritualism? Are any of your Spiritualist neighbors in any sense injured by this privilege. You cannot point to one either here or elsewhere.

Spiritual life reveals the sacredness of our identity. We are taught that "the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets." We too, have fears for the sanity of any medium

developed through inharmonious relationships, and permitted to attempt to gratify the unbounded curiosity of idle and superstitious visitors. We have seen such, and feel that we have prevented most terrible results, by showing them the folly of attempting to gratify what never was and never can be gratified. We must say, by the prerogative granted to every man, to Spiritualism as to every other great fact, depart, when other duties and responsibilities claim our attention. We cannot control the rain or the winds, but we can build our shelters and adjust our sails. No man will be injured by spiritual privileges if he preserve his individuality; any man may be ruined by it who yields it *even* to spirits. It is the wise adaptation and application of any great truth that leads to good results. Steam is not responsible for explosions, but engineers are. So Spiritualism is not responsible for lunacy, but men who ignorantly or wilfully abuse it are; and for one, I desire to be held to the most strict responsibility for any evil that may occur under my application of it, but not for any other man's.

But you will tell me that the light of Spiritualism is so obscure—so much mystery connected with it—so vague—so unsatisfactory. Is this your fault, or ours? Or, rather, is this our fault, or that of spirit monitors? A block of wood will cast its shadow. Should human minds be expected to do less? Every truth, upon every subject, shows its contacts with the channels through which it flows. To us, the teaching is pure, uniform, and opens, as our minds open and our practices tally in virtuous conduct and benevolent aims. We were made to *learn*; not to *pry* into mysteries to boast of our attainments, and lord it over some less favored brother. Hence, we must seek *in the Spirit*, if we would gain of the Spirit; and how few there are who do this! “Whatsoever is of the Spirit is Spirit.”

If Spiritualism were what many foolishly suppose it to be—did it take the place of our reason, our power of thought, or judgment, it would, indeed, curse us with insanity, and doom us to the hopeless ignorance that ever fears a Devil, where, a higher illumination, would worship a God. Spiritualism is a revelation of a law of God in man, inscribed by

an angel host, and its disclosures come to us to invigorate, and not destroy the souls we bear. Purity of mind and honesty of purpose are its indispensable conditions, as they are the only incentives to virtue. Spiritualism reveals God in all things—the Beginning, Life, End of all. If in all, in us by the Spirit he has given us; and as we open, purify and elevate that Spirit, it finds its kindred in all that surrounds it, and its infinite relationship to those cherished ones that are ever near it. We may behold diversity, then, but no contradiction. We may have endless variety, for the life and destiny of man is various, but all tends to the same end—viz: THE GOOD OF MAN!

The light of Heaven is not less pure because variously reflected by the objects of sight around. The inscriptions of Divine wisdom and goodness upon the Heavens that overarch our every horizon, are not less perfect because man fails to see the glory of his God, imprinted there. Different degrees of capacity and circumstances, reflect from the same light, different impressions. The Temple of Freedom may be erected in the brotherly and sisterly regard of those who have passed from our sight, but we may fail to come near enough to share its pure light and undimmed glory. We should rejoice that we have, in spiritual approach, a light, which, in its apparent divergences, adapts itself to different conditions and occupations. This fact may reprove our selfishness, but it will improve our spiritual sympathy. Capacity, however, will not always measure immortality; “for the day is not distant when the evidence of Spiritual Communion will be as plain as these heavens, and as firm as this earth, and radiate man in God!”

But, says another, “what you claim is miraculous, and we cannot believe in miracles.” Nor do we believe in miracles in the ordinary and philosophical meaning of that word. That is, we do not believe that God violates his own laws. Nature, in its principles and results, is of God. But spirit, with us, is nature also, only a higher form than the external manifestations usually called by that name. Nature is of God, and therefore perfect for all the ends he contemplates. Its laws are his laws, and therefore, whenever

we define miracle to be a violation of any law of Nature, our definition makes it a violation of the law of God—an absurdity. For if God be perfect in working as in purpose, the whole of Nature, as his work, must be perfect. Consequently, any violation implies imperfection, either in the one or the other; and our minds revolt at the idea, in the exact proportion in which they are true to the law of God written within us.

But the lack of faith in a miracle as a violation of the law of God, does not, necessarily, imply or produce a denial of the event, or fact, called miraculous. It depends upon its own evidence, and our faith upon the knowledge of, and faithfulness to that evidence. Which, simply stated, is, that we do not make our own capacity, or that of others, the standard of Divine operation—another absurdity.

What are called miracles, therefore, may have been performed—may have disclosed a law of Nature higher than those previously recognized, and even so much higher as to overbear, or take the place of some inferior method, and yet there is no violation.

Thus, what is wonderful to one degree of culture, or point of observation, may be miraculous to another; and what strikes one mind as a disclosure of a higher law, may strike another as a violation of a lower one. The true or false conception is the result or lack of cultivation.

If, therefore, Moses, the Prophets and Apostles of Israel, performed miraculous works, or were made the instruments of disclosures and powers never before recognized, it was by a knowledge of, or a connection with, powers of God, (or Nature, if we prefer an inferior name,) higher and superior to those previously known. Miracles, then, as the result of a higher law of Nature, we believe; but miracles, as a violation of Nature, we deny, and do so with a confidence, which is, to us, the highest form of faith in God, or Divine perfection, possible to our minds. And we would modestly suggest that this distinction meets alike the difficulties of the honest skeptic and the conscientious dogmatist.

Allow us to illustrate: It was a miracle of wisdom and power to a North American Indian, to see a ship moving

over the waves of the ocean in safety, bearing men and animals comfortably, from some unknown region, to his native shores. It was a miracle of kindness from God, and of skill in man, to produce a field of waving grain—to reduce it to an inviting meal, and find in it a means of sustenance and pleasure. It was a miracle of Prophecy to foretell an eclipse, and the fall of his nations, and the rise of another so essentially different in population, arts and social characteristics. But were these miracles to a cultivated European? Were they not the result of a knowledge of higher powers of the same Nature, and of the same Divinity in Nature; and especially in man, as its noblest external manifestation? Unquestionably so. Just so the wonders of the Bible record, so far as they are accurately recorded, are disclosures of a higher law than that known or used by those who called them, or still call them, miracles in the sense of a violation of law. To deny a prophecy because we cannot make one, would be as rational as it would have been in the Indian to deny a ship because he could not construct one, or to deny the golden harvest because he knew not the laws of Nature or mind by which it was produced. All religionists, of every dogmatic creed, will agree with us here. Can they be true to themselves and deny what follows? To worship the man who performs the miracle of instantly healing the sick, or who delivers a clear and unmistakable prophecy, or discloses a new axiom of wisdom, or a new application of an old one, or to worship the miracle, would be equally absurd, and would, in nothing, essentially differ from the Indian's worship of the ship or the husbandman.

God is in all things, and as his Divinity opens in us we see his power, and are prepared to use it in all that surrounds us. In the plant that grows, and the star that burns; in the food that sustains and the medicine that relieves life; and we find the one and appropriate the other, as our minds open to that Spirit of all Wisdom, whose dwelling is everywhere; whose confinement is nowhere.

If a miracle be true, and I believe it not, it is easy to see where the difficulty lies. If the report of it be false, and I believe it, does not the mistake still lie in me?

To be true to myself, therefore, is to be true to all things, as I come in contact with them, and they with me—is to be true to my fellow and my God.

Let me not say, then, I believe in Christ unless I do, and let me not hesitate to affirm it when I do, and to what extent, and upon what evidence, whenever and wherever it is made my clear duty to avow my faith. Now, then, at this moment, from as careful an examination of all the evidence without me, and in all the exercise of the powers within me, I solemnly affirm that I believe in *the Christ* that dwelt in Jesus of Nazareth, as the brightest and purest manifestation of Spirit in Humanity—that it was of God, and in this sense, was God; and that to the extent, however limited, in which the spirit of any human being opens in wisdom and love, it is also of God, and is God—the wisdom is God; and its powers are his powers, and will secure as great and greater works, as time and Providence may require; and that when his spirit shall be unfolded in all, God will be Christ in all, and every human soul feel and know and forever rejoice in the ties of that kindred in all, which is God manifest in humanity—the fullness of his Spirit filling all things. And so may it be; and may we grow daily to receive our measure in the Divine fullness! Amen! and Amén!!

If we believe, then, let us speak—if we believe not, our own darkness condemns us, and in every serious hour, the immortal instincts of our nature will seek for LIGHT! Beneath the radiations of Spiritual Light, we will yet see the broad streamer of Life Immortal, waved as by angel hands, high over all the clouds of ignorance and injury.

“And so our life will flow
From its mysterious urn, a sacred stream,
In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure
Shall yet be mirrored; then when shapes of ill
Shall hover round its surface, it shall glide in Light,
And take no shadow from them!”

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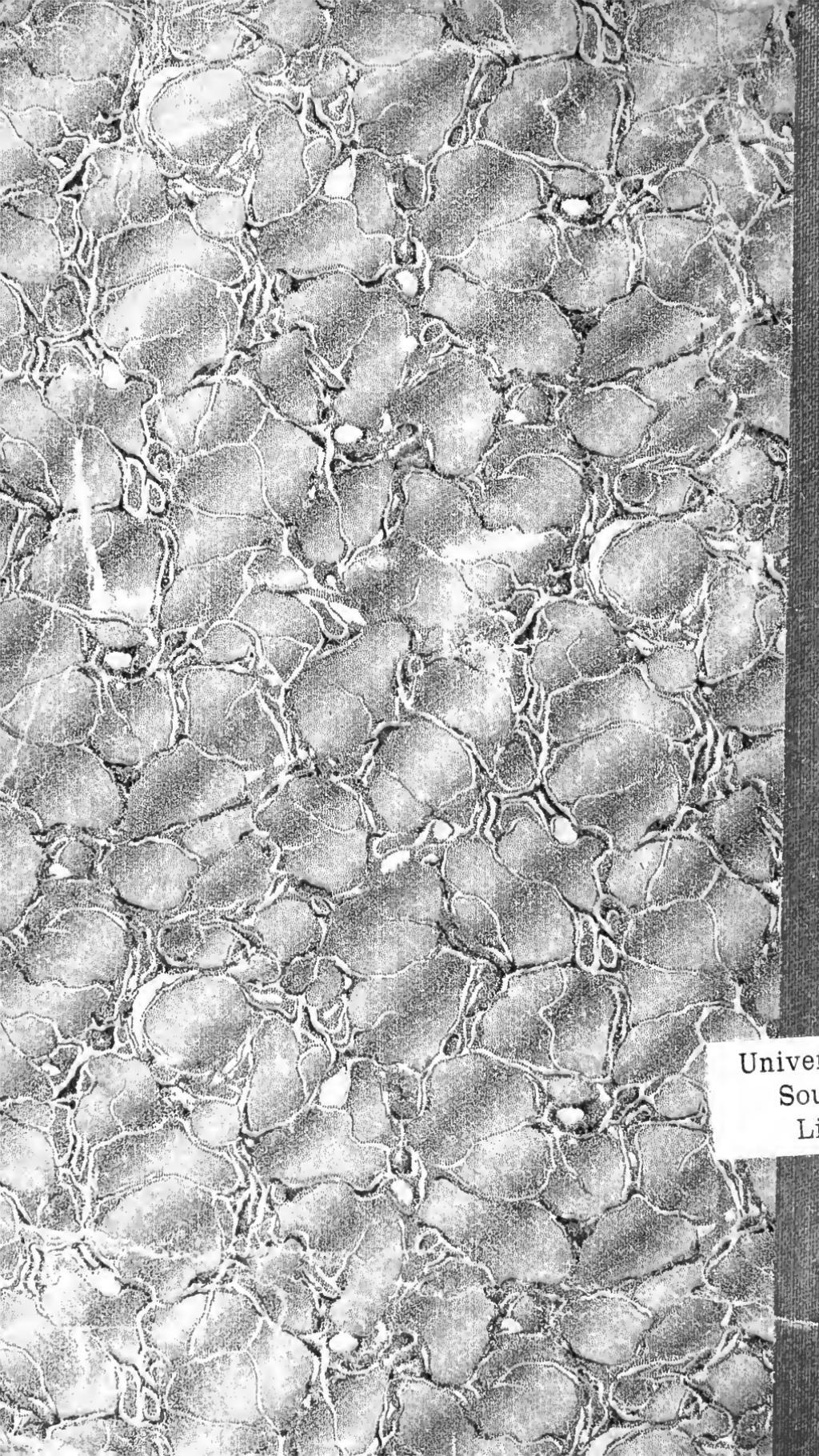
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